



STATE OF WASHINGTON
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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May 19, 2006

Victor Moore
Director
Office of Financial Management
PO Box 43113
Olympia, Washington 98504-3113

Dear Mr. Moore:

The Washington State Transportation Commission approved its 2007/09 Strategic Plan on May 16th, 2006 and we have enclosed the plan per OFM requirements.

This plan will support the Commission's continuing efforts to effectively carry out its mandates, which include providing transportation policy and fiscal guidance, conducting an active public outreach program on transportation matters, serving as the state's tolling authority, serving as the oversight body of Public/Private Partnership initiatives, and providing ongoing performance measurement oversight of transportation-related agencies.

We appreciate your consideration of this Strategic Plan. If you have any questions, please contact myself or the Commission's Executive Director, Reema Griffith at (360) 705-7070.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dan O'Neal".

Dan O'Neal
Chair



WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2009

MISSION

The Washington State Transportation Commission represents the public's interest in the areas of transportation policy development, long-term planning, financing and transportation system and service delivery.

LISTING OF STATUTORY AUTHORITY REFERENCES

There are three primary statutes pertaining to creation of the Commission and outlining its general responsibilities.

- RCW 47.01.051 creates the Commission and establishes the Commission's membership.
- RCW 47.01.061 & .101 establishes guidelines for the Commission's procedures and internal operations.
- RCW 47.01.071 & .075 outlines the Commission's functions, powers and duties.

COMMISSION GOALS

1. Furnish transportation policy and financial guidance to the Legislature and the Governor's Office aimed at providing useful insight and recommendations on specific policy issues, and on the development of long-term policy and investment planning.
2. Actively engage the public and stakeholders to allow for input into the development of the Commission's transportation plans, policies and financing decisions.
3. Serve as the state's highway tolling authority (which includes setting ferry fares) setting tolls and fares in a manner that is responsive to users' and system needs, and is flexible and equitable in accordance with the Commission's statutory mandate.
4. Provide oversight over the Department of Transportation's Innovative Partnerships Program to ensure a fully independent proposal and bid review process, as well as ensuring an informed, unbiased final selection and contract execution protocol.
5. Provide ongoing performance oversight of transportation-related agencies.

OBJECTIVES

Submit final reports on the Commission's two policy studies: 1) Comprehensive Statewide Tolling Study; 2) Statewide Rail Capacity and System Needs Study.

Submit an annual transportation report to the Legislature and the Governor's Office communicating citizen input as heard through the Commission's outreach efforts, identifying critical transportation needs, outlining performance review findings, and identifying challenges facing policy makers in the coming year.

Maximize opportunities for interaction between the Commission and the public including transportation stakeholders and state and local governments.

Increase communication and interaction between the Commission, the Legislature, the Governor's Office, the Office of Financial Management, the Department of Transportation, the state's Federal Congressional delegation, and Federal Officials.

Conduct studies and investigations that will inform policy discussions.

Set tolls on authorized state highway facilities and set ferry fares as required by law.

Initiate performance measure reviews of transportation-related agencies as funding allows.

Provide oversight of the Department of Transportation's Innovative Partnerships program.

STRATEGIES

Strategies for Implementing Goal #1 – Furnish transportation policy and financial guidance to the Legislature and the Governor's Office aimed at providing useful insight and recommendations on specific policy issues, and on the development of long-term policy and investment planning.

- Submit an annual report that reflects the results of the Commission's ongoing public outreach, policy studies and investigations, and performance reviews of transportation-related agencies to the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management.
- Provide regular communications to the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management regarding transportation issues and needs.
- Submit a 10-year transportation investment plan in even years (beginning in 2008) to support the Legislature's and the Governor's budget development processes.
- Update the Washington Transportation Plan at least every five years to ensure the plan adequately supports the state's transportation budget process and long term investment and policy planning.

Strategies for Implementing Goal #2 — Actively engage the public and stakeholders to allow for input into the development of the Commission's transportation plans, policies and financing decisions.

- In addition to meetings in Olympia, hold approximately five Commission meetings per year in cities around the state to allow for the exploration of local transportation issues.
- Hold regional transportation forums every three to five years that will bring together transportation interests from all around the state and region to discuss key transportation issues, identify opportunities and address problem areas.
- Engage local leaders and officials in discussions related to the Commission's work and its impact on their city/county/region.
- Meet with key stakeholders on a regular basis to strengthen relationships and ensure open communication on various transportation issues statewide.
- Collaborate with other state agencies to strengthen the effectiveness of systemwide efforts in addressing areas such as highway, rail and waterborne safety and operations.

- Actively attend and participate in professional seminars, forums, conferences, and other various city, county and regional functions and meetings in which transportation topics and issues are discussed.
- Give informative presentations on a regular basis and participate in other public outreach efforts to discuss transportation issues and solicit feedback from the public.

Strategies for Implementing Goal #3 - Serve as the state's highway tolling authority (which includes setting ferry fares) setting tolls and fares in a manner that is responsive to users' and system needs, and is flexible and equitable in accordance with the Commission's statutory mandate.

- Set tolls and ferry fares at levels that ensure the state is able to meet its financial obligations and commitments, and is able to deliver on any other mandates as specified in law.
- Hold hearings to allow for public input into the Commission's toll and ferry fare setting process and decision-making.
- Consult with the Legislature, the Governor's Office, the Office of Financial Management and the Department of Transportation to ensure the Commission's toll and ferry fare setting direction and actions are clearly understood and are responsive to each agency's needs and issues.
- Consult with the Department of Transportation to ensure any toll action taken by the Commission adequately meets the requirements of the subject facility and is in synch with other DOT programs that may be impacted by the toll setting.
- Conduct periodic surveys (as funding allows) aimed at gauging attitudes and acceptance of highway tolling, and utilize the findings of the survey work to construct and execute an ongoing education campaign (as funding allows) aimed at addressing public concerns and furthering education on what tolling is, how it works and how it can benefit the citizens of this state.

Strategies For Implementing Goal #4 - Provide oversight over the Department of Transportations Innovative Partnerships Program (TIP) to ensure a fully independent proposal and bid review process, as well as ensuring an informed, unbiased final selection and contract execution protocol.

- Create and establish, in full cooperation with the department, the administrative rules by which the TIP program is to be administered.
- Provide oversight of the TIP program.
- Ensure that any new and innovative methods of financing related to administering state highway projects is feasible, meets the requirements of RCW 47.29 et seq., and is in the public's best interest.
- Serve as the final decision maker on bid/proposal reviews and selection, and final contract execution.
- After adequate advisement from expert review panels, actively consult with the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management for purposes of deciding whether or not a proposed project agreement should be accepted, denied, or further negotiated.

Strategies For Implementing Goal #5 - Provide ongoing performance oversight of transportation-related agencies.

- Utilize the Commission established performance benchmarks and the Department of Transportation's Measures, Markers and Mileposts report to monitor the performance of the transportation system and capital delivery program and to effectively evaluate whether the system meets the public's needs and achieves the statewide goals as outlined in the Washington Transportation Plan.
- Acquire the necessary resources to adequately support the Commission's ability to conduct performance measure reviews of transportation-related agencies so that the findings of the reviews may be utilized by the Legislature and the Governor's Office in its policy and budget deliberations, and by the State Auditor's Office in determining if and when a full performance audit is warranted.
- Hold regular performance status forums in which transportation-related agencies appear before the Commission to report on their current performance measures and outcome data in a GMAP-type format that appropriately aligns with the requirements of the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management. The Commission will report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature, the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management prior to each legislative session as part of the Commission's annual report (referenced above in the strategies for Goal #1, first bullet).

APPRAISAL OF THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

The critical factors for the Commissions' consideration in the implementation of its goals are as follows:

- The ever-increasing demand being placed upon the current transportation system infrastructure.
- The ongoing need for additional investments to be made in the statewide transportation system to address growing demands and deficiencies.
- The challenge presented by significant public skepticism regarding the level of government accountability and trust in how tax dollars are spent.
- The ever-growing complexity of multi-layered transportation governance at the local, regional and state levels, leading to potential overlap, conflict and competition over the same tax base and opportunities.

TRENDS IN CUSTOMER CHARACTERISTICS

The Commission continues to receive correspondence from various organizations and the public at large regarding decisions that are pending or have been made, in an effort to influence its decisions regarding planning, investments, tolling and fare setting, etc. While the majority of the public may not participate in the Commission's traditional public meetings, the Commission found that its direct contact with local and regional governmental entities and the frequent occurrence of local area meetings is an approach that has a high level of support from local leaders and officials, who encourage the Commission to continue this level of interaction. Area meetings and direct interactions with local leaders and offices continue to be critical mechanisms for communicating with the public and hearing the priorities and issues of local areas and regions throughout the state.

In setting ferry fares and tolls, the Commission has held multiple local public meetings to allow for public input and comment on proposed fare and toll levels and structures. The Commission also engages the use of citizen advisory boards and panels to ensure the public's needs and interests are fully represented and communicated, and which subsequently have an appropriate influence on the Commission's deliberations in setting tolls and fares. The Commission intends on continuing the practice to ensure full public involvement in toll and fare setting processes.

STRATEGY AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The current size of the Commission staff is not sufficient to ensure successful accomplishment of all of the goals and strategies contained herein if the Commission is to do so in an independent, self-supporting manner.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Current Commission Output Measure:

By survey, percentage of individuals satisfied with their access to and the process of Commission decision-making.

Results:

Results are pending the end of the 05-07 biennium due to the fact that this measure is a biennial measure.

Efforts to Close the Gap:

We do not know if a gap exists, but regardless of this fact, the Commission intends on making the following adjustments:

- The Commission will increase the number of local area meetings which will therefore increase the public's access to transportation and provide them with the opportunity to shape policy and budget decisions.
- Commissioners will increase their participation in public meetings throughout the state and will actively pursue public speaking engagements to further allow for the sharing of transportation related information with the public and stakeholders.

Emerging Issues and Performance Improvement Opportunities for the Next Biennium:

- The Commission concluded that its current output measure is adequate on a short-term basis but does not necessarily reflect the range of its activities for the long-term.
- The Commission will reevaluate its performance measures as part of its 07-09 biennial budget process.

Examples of potential performance measures include:

- Evaluating the usefulness of the Washington Transportation Plan and the 10-year investment plan.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the Commission's annual reports and communications.
- Determining the outcome of performance measure reviews of transportation-related agencies to be conducted in the future.
- Determining the value of information presented at local area meetings throughout the state.

- Determining the outcome and impact of tolls and fares that are set by the Commission.
- Determine changes in public attitudes towards tolling.

MAJOR PARTNERS OF THE COMMISSION

Local Governments

The Commission met with the Association of Washington Cities, the Washington State Association of Counties, and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations throughout the state. This was to ensure their involvement in formulation of the Washington Transportation Plan. These meetings allowed for the discussion of the transportation needs and priorities of cities, counties and regions with the intent that the updated Washington Transportation Plan would reflect those needs in concert with the states needs. The Commission will continue to have formal and informal discussions with local government representatives.

Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

The fifteen statewide RTPO's and MPO's are essential partners in the Commission's policy work. Individual Commissioners regularly participate in the RTPO and MPO meetings in their area and are often times members and serve on their boards. Commissioners communicate concerns or issues they have heard in these meetings to the entire Commission for further discussion and deliberation. The MPO's and RTPO's are also directly involved in the Commission's development of the state's long-term transportation plan.

Department of Transportation

The Commission's work often impacts the department's programs and some of the department's work is dependant on the Commissions approval, thus requiring a close working relationship and strong partnership to ensure the success of both agencies. The Department also provides technical staff support and expertise as well as operational support which are vital to the Commission's ability to fully execute many of its mandates.

The Governor and The Legislature

It is crucial for the Commission to have ongoing and constructive relationships with the Governor and the Legislature to ensure a responsive and effective transportation system that the public can fully support and believe in.

ASSESSMENT OF AGENCY FINANCIAL PLAN

Newly assigned responsibilities from the Legislature, including the development of a 10 year transportation investment plan, providing for the review and oversight of the Department of Transportation's Innovative Partnerships Program, and conducting performance reviews of transportation-related agencies will require additional funding and an additional staff person with fiscal expertise to ensure the Commission can independently execute these and other mandates.